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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

DIRECTOR OF NET ASSESSMENT

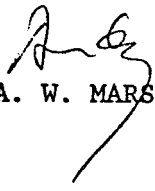
April 9, 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. GORDON NEGUS, ASST VICE DIR RESEARCH, DIA
[REDACTED] HQ CIA

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SUBJECT: Status Report

Here is a short status report of some research that may be of interest to you. Fred Starr and I initiated this work after a discussion with Fred Starr while he was still at the Wilson Center. This work will be finished at the end of the summer. Copies of the full report will be sent to you then.


A. W. MARSHALL

9

Events in Iran since 1978 have favored--and have partly been influenced by--the Soviet Union. The overthrow of the shah, the takeover by a radical regime and the humiliation of the Americans were all events in the Soviet interest, as they all amounted to losses for U.S. strategy, and influence in the Middle East and therefore creating greater opportunities for enhancing Soviet domination.

The advent of the Iraq-Iran war was another fortuitous event for the Soviets. Although it created for them something of a dilemma as to which side to support, in true Soviet fashion they have managed to support their interests on both sides by a skillful mixing of overt and covert activities. Although the political relations between Moscow and Teheran remain strained the Soviets have sought to cultivate economic ties. Being largely cut off from the West the Iranians have stepped up their trade with the USSR. In 1981 bilateral trade amounted to a record \$1.2 billion about 30% higher than in 1978, the last year of the Shah's regime. During the same period the Soviet's bought 16 million barrels of Iranian oil. Although direct delivery of arms and equipment from the Soviet Union is said to be minimal; Libya, Syria and North Korea are reported to be supplying items of Soviet origin. In mid-February the Soviet Union and Iran signed a protocol between the two countries concerning future technical cooperation on joint power projects.

In addition, during recent months the Soviets are reported to have maneuvered invitations from the Khomeini regime to provide advisors in intelligence and security functions, classic avenues of subversion leading to eventual takeover. The Tudeh (Communist) Party, which has long been a tool of the Soviets, is receiving new Soviet support and guidance. The Soviets are making their best efforts to infiltrate the two other major leftist groups--The Mujahedin and The Fedayin. There are reports of secret agents being inserted in small groups into Iran through Baluchistan in the south and through Azerbaijan, Khorasan and Mqzandaran in the north. The Soviets are playing a deadly serious game. It bears many similarities to their earlier tactics in neighboring Afghanistan.

During the past year and a half political repression and economic erosion have accelerated the growing sense of disenchantment with the regime. According to some observers the base of Khomeini's support is only about 15% of the population. However, the several opposition groups are splintered and biding their time. In this kind of an unstable situation the Soviets are prepared to exploit developments to their advantage and it must be anticipated that the Kremlin will be ready to capitalize on the chaotic environment which is likely to arise in the post-Khomeini period.

The SRI Strategic Studies Center recently completed a study which updated the Soviet 1941 high command plan for Iran. It would be useful and timely to continue this general avenue of research by analyzing Soviet takeover strategies and tactics, as they have been applied before and how they might specifically be applied to Iran in the future. If the existing threat of Iran's takeover were to become a reality, the already precarious situation in the Middle East would take a major turn for the worst. As the recently completed SRI study shows, the Soviet military capabilities are greatly enhanced from what they were in 1941, and these forces can play a major role in the overall takeover strategy for Iran--a combination of political, psychological, economic and military elements skillfully combined to add one more increment to the expanding perimeter of Soviet power. The Strategic Studies Center is prepared to submit a proposal for such a study.